

## PLAYS BY T. B. MORRIS

THE BEAUTIFUL ONE (Three Acts).  
 THE SONG OF ENGLAND (Full-length Pageant Play).  
 A MAN IN A STREET (One Act).  
 THE WOMAN (One Act).  
 CASSANDRA (ONE ACT)  
 TUDOR THORNS (ONE ACT)  
 MADEMOISELLE DEPARTS (One Act).  
 NIGHT ON THE HILL (One Act).  
 CARNIVAL OF STEEL (One Act).  
 PROGRESS TO FOTHERINGHAY (One Act).  
 FOR A WOMAN OR TWO (Short Plays and Monologues).  
 LION OF SPARTA (One Act).  
 RENAISSANCE NIGHT (One Act).  
 WILD FOR TO HOLD (One Act).  
 CATS OF EGYPT (One Act).  
 PETTICOATS PREFERRED (One Act).  
 DARK BETROTHAL (One Act).  
 MIRROR TO ELIZABETH (One Act).  
 WHITE QUEEN, RED QUEEN (One Act).  
 THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE (One Act).  
 THE SHADOW OF A QUEEN (One Act).  
 SHALL WE LEAVE THE GENTLEMEN? (One Act).  
 TWO LADIES OF FLORENCE (One Act).  
 SLEEPING BEAUTY  
 THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TARTS } (Children's Plays).

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# THE WOMAN.

by T.B.MORRIS



SPECIMEN

NOT TO BE TAKEN AWAY  
A Play in One Act

1/6 net

SAMUEL FRENCH LIMITED



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A Play in One Act

by

T. B. MORRIS.

SAMUEL FRENCH LIMITED  
LONDON



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## CHARACTERS

FIRST WOMAN OF COLCHIS.

SECOND WOMAN OF COLCHIS.

ABSYRTUS (a Prince) } (Children of Æetes).  
MEDEA (a Princess) }

PASITHEA } (Maidens attendant on Medea).  
NEPHELE }

ORCA (an ancient Sibyl).

ÆETES (King of Colchis).

A SLAVE (boy or girl) (Attendant on Æetes).

JASON (Leader of the Argonauts).

Colchian soldiers, Argonauts, and other women of  
Colchis (optional).

SCENE.—The City of Æa in Colchis. Outside the Palace of  
the King on a day of the remote past.



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## THE WOMAN

*From the centre of the stage wide steps run up to a terrace at the back, overlooking the river-mouth and the sea. Towards the R., on the terrace, are two huge pillars standing close together, their capitals out of sight. These pillars are decorated with gigantic figures painted in antique barbaric style and age-dimmed beautiful colouring. The whole of the back wall is taken up by a wide expanse of sea and sky, gleaming with sunlight at the opening, but changing in colour towards the end of the play. On the terrace is a throne-like seat of stone, and down stage on the lowest level, R. and L., are plain stone seats or blocks of stone. Entrances R. and L. That on the R. may represent the great door of the palace, in keeping with the pillars and set obliquely so that they appear to form one side of its portico. The entrance on the L. may be masked by another pillar or a formalized rock.*

*Actually, however, the play may be produced quite simply against any plain background, including curtains with screens or screens alone, or out of doors, and there is wide possibility of variation on the above. Differing stage levels are desirable. If the sea is not visible in the setting it is imagined as off stage to the L.*

*Two women only are included as Chorus, but additional women, as well as Colchian soldiers and Argonauts, may be included for introduction at appropriate times if it is desired to build up larger static and moving groups for the enhancing of pictorial effect. The production should be sufficiently formalized to bring out all movements and poses as deliberate pictures. It is suggested that make-up should be somewhat exaggerated to give some resemblance to the masks of the Ancient Greek theatre.*

*Barbaric music continues for a moment with the theatre in darkness to build up atmosphere, and, if*



there are no proscenium curtains, to allow the first players to get to their places.

At the rise of lights or the CURTAIN the two WOMEN OF COLCHIS are discovered on the terrace, with water-pots or market-baskets, lingering in gossip. The music stops.

FIRST WOMAN (*suddenly tense, pointing*). Look! A ship!

SECOND WOMAN (*looking*). Bearing down to the mouth of our river!

FIRST WOMAN (*calling off R., excitedly, looking up as if to a height of wall*). Hi! Soldiers! Look there—a ship!

SECOND WOMAN. A strange galley. But no stranger has ever won past the Blue Rocks. They must be gods on her.

FIRST WOMAN (*returning*). Gods or no, they have the thews of men. See how their oars flash golden in the sun.

(A brazen gong begins to clang off R. A moment later

ABSYRTUS, a young prince, enters hurriedly R., buckling on a sword. The WOMEN make obeisance.)

ABSYRTUS. What is it?

FIRST WOMAN. A ship, my lord Absyrtus. Look! Entering the river.

(ABSYRTUS looks, then darts back R., calling off.)

ABSYRTUS. Ten companies of spearmen to the river-bank! Double the archers on the walls! Load the catapults!

FIRST WOMAN. Then they bring war.

SECOND WOMAN (*shuddering*). War!

(Any Supers may crowd on R. and L. forming an excited, anxious group, looking off towards L. The gong stops. MEDEA, a young princess, imperious and strikingly beautiful, with black or vivid Titian-red hair, enters R., followed by PASITHEA and NEPHELE, young girls who attend her. MEDEA goes to

ABSYRTUS. *The WOMEN and Supers make obeisance to her.*)

MEDEA. Why do they sound the alarm, brother?

ABSYRTUS. Look, Medea. A ship—almost in.

(MEDEA stands erect and graceful for a moment, her hands shading her eyes.)

MEDEA. A beautiful ship. (*Awed.*) The most beautiful ship I have ever seen.

ABSYRTUS. She'll be less beautiful soon. (*Calling off R.*) Draw up the catapults!

MEDEA. Wait, Absyrtus! These are no ordinary men.

ABSYRTUS (*grimly*). That's the greater reason for not letting them win to land.

MEDEA. There are no more than fifty. I can see them now, and their leader in golden armour—

ABSYRTUS (*anxious for her*). Medea—you should not be here, mark for their arrows.

MEDEA (*laughing*). Where else? We get little enough excitement.

ABSYRTUS (*affectionately*). Excitement? Too much peril here for you. I'd not have you come to harm. Get back before I give the order to fire.

MEDEA. Wait, I say. You always were too impulsive. If they are unfriendly you may take them well enough ashore—such a handful. Besides—'twere a pity to sink that lovely ship.

ABSYRTUS. That's true enough. (*Calling off R.*) Hold your fire! (*Staring.*) Look at the shape of those crests. They're Greeks, Medea.

MEDEA. Greeks! The gods curse them, then. (*Wondering.*) But if Greeks they must have won past the Symplegades—and if they have done that they must indeed be heroes.

ABSYRTUS. Where is the King?

MEDEA (*contemptuously*). Not yet awake after last night's wine.

ABSYRTUS. Pah! Go and rouse him.

MEDEA. Not I. Nephele shall go.



(*She gestures to NEPHELE, who bows and goes off R.*)

ABSYRTUS. But I want *you* away from here. A stray arrow, or perhaps a deliberate one. . . . I know no good of the Greeks.

MEDEA. Lords of the earth they think themselves. But I'll not run from them.

ABSYRTUS. You are too dear for peril, sister. And too beautiful for their possessive eyes.

MEDEA. The ship is nearly in. Plain enough now they are no slaves who pull those oars. And their captain—

ABSYRTUS. A living pride. See how he carries his head. I must get down to the beach to lead my spears.

(*He runs off R., to return in a moment with his helmet and shield. MEDEA, who has been looking off intently, catches his arm as he returns.*)

MEDEA. Brother—there is more than a raiding expedition here. Such a company of men—

ABSYRTUS (*angrily*). Come to sue for the hand of the Princess Medea, I suppose? Listen, sister. I've heard this much of the Greeks—they do not *marry* outside their own people.

MEDEA. Don't fear for me. There's no man among them great enough to take Medea by force.

ABSYRTUS. We'll show them who's to be taken—and some we'll take alive. They'll make goodly offering for the god.

MEDEA. No, no!

ABSYRTUS. What? And you High Priestess—

MEDEA (*quickly*). Enough of that! Find out the errand of these strangers. They may come in peace—

ABSYRTUS. They come because they want something. Take care, Medea.

(*He runs off L., drawing his sword. ORCA, an old woman, has entered R. and is sidling up to MEDEA.*)

ORCA. Ay, they want something. Let your

brother kill them all, Princess—(*cackling*) or save a few alive for the old serpent. Our serpent loves to crush the bones of living men, and the higher-born the better.

MEDEA (*shuddering*). Ah—cruel!

ORCA. We are what life makes us. Wait until you have felt the blows of life, Princess.

MEDEA. What do they want, those men?

ORCA. No doubt about that. There is but one thing in barbarian Colchis whose fame has gone through all the world.

MEDEA (*reacting*). The Golden Fleece?

ORCA. Ay.

PASITHEA } (*together—horrificed*). The Golden  
FIRST WOMAN } Fleece!  
SECOND WOMAN }

MEDEA. They may as well strive for the golden chariot of the sun himself.

ORCA (*darkly*). Perhaps.

MEDEA (*staring at her*). There is no means they may come by it, save by ordeals too great for man or hero—too great, perhaps, for the gods themselves.

ORCA. The gods have their ways of getting what they want.

MEDEA (*looking off L.*). He who leads those strangers is beautiful enough for any god.

ORCA (*with a dry chuckle*). Ay, ay. They have their ways—gods and men.

(*NEPHELE enters R.*)

MEDEA. Look! He has come ashore alone, their leader, his hands open. What bravery is this! One man, empty-handed, among the spears of Colchis.

ORCA. A trick, perhaps. These Greeks are cunning.

MEDEA. Godlike—but he is no god. This is a man.

ORCA. Men will go out like gods on their desperate errands, and their women may wait at home and wring their hands for them—ay, and bear their



children in loneliness. If I were you I'd not look at him too long, Princess.

PASITHEA (*giggling*). Oh, but he's lovely to look at.

NEPHELE. But what good ever came to a maid from looking at a man?

FIRST WOMAN. That depends on the maid—as you'll know one of these days.

SECOND WOMAN. They'll ever look, as long as men are men.

PASITHEA (*giggling*). And men will look, too, as long as maids are—maids. (*Laughter.*)

MEDEA (*angrily*). Peace, chatterers!

ORCA. Here is the King.

(ÆETES, King of Colchis, enters R., half drunken, carrying a wine-cup in his hand. He drinks frequently from this, holding it out to be replenished by a boy or girl SLAVE who attends him closely, carrying a vase of wine. MEDEA gives him a brief, contemptuous glance over her shoulder. The others make obeisance.)

ÆETES (*petulantly, a hand to his head*). What is all this noise? Haven't I said I will not be disturbed?

MEDEA (*coldly*). There is disturbance enough here, even for your rousing, Father. (*She points L.*)

ÆETES (*starting*). A ship! Invaders! War! Why wasn't I called? What's come to the soldiers? Why aren't the catapults working—and the archers? (*Gesturing R.*) Archers—shoot, men! Mow them into the river!

MEDEA (*instantly gesturing to cancel his order*). No! Hold your arrows! Wait the orders of Prince Absyrtus!

ÆETES. What folly is this? They must be killed before they land.

MEDEA. Absyrtus will see to it.

ÆETES. Then why doesn't he? Why are the spearmen idle down there? Why don't they attack? By the gods, we shall be overwhelmed—

MEDEA. What? By fifty—against our hundreds?

ORCA. But what a fifty! I think I begin to know them now. There's one, a mighty one, in a lion's hide and with a great club. That must be Hercules.

OTHERS (*reacting*). Hercules!

ORCA. And two who stand in the stern, like as the doubles of pearls. Twin brothers for all the world to see, and, if such twins as they are, then Castor and Polydeuces.

FIRST WOMAN. The gods defend us!

SECOND WOMAN. I said they must be more than men.

ORCA. And see—Meleager, Orpheus, Admetus, Theseus—

NEPHELE. Ah! We are lost indeed!

PASITHEA (*gaily*). Our hearts, anyway, are in danger of losing.

MEDEA. Quiet! (*To ORCA.*) Who is the leader—he who has come ashore?

ORCA. I do not know him.

MEDEA. Who is he—to lead such a company—

ORCA. See, he is coming here with your brother.

ÆETES. Why weren't they driven away? That comes of my not being here to attend to everything. We don't want them here—a lot of rascally Greeks. After our provisions, I suppose, or our soldiers to bear the brunt of some war for them, with the best of our maidens for their ravishing.

PASITHEA. Oh!

ORCA. They want the Golden Fleece.

ÆETES (*starting*). What? (*In a fit of laughter.*) Oho-ho! Is that all they want? The Golden Fleece—no more than that? Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho!

ORCA. Have care, my lord.

ÆETES (*still laughing*). I never heard such a thing! Silly old woman—oho-ho!—you've quite cured my headache. The Golden Fleece—why, all their gods couldn't take it—



ORCA. I said—have care. These Greeks have come a long way, and they're well used to getting what they want.

ÆETES. The Golden Fleece! If they can win that they may have the sun and moon to keep it company. Ay, Apollo for their helmsman and Artemis for light o' love.

*(All except MEDEA react in horror.)*

FIRST WOMAN *(whispering)*. Ah, dreadful words!

SECOND WOMAN *(whispering)*. Even a king may not blaspheme at the gods.

ÆETES. Those are but the gods of the Greeks. They have no power in Colchis. *(Chuckling.)* We'll show these Greeks a god—if they really favour this mad scheme.

*(He gestures to the SLAVE to refill his wine-cup. He is chuckling and drinking as ABSYRTUS enters L., his sword drawn.)*

ABSYRTUS *(bowing coldly)*. Here is the captain of the Greek ship, who has come alone with a word for you. I've told him he wastes his time.

*(He stands aside for JASON to enter. JASON is a splendid young man in golden armour, with a great crested helmet, shield and sheathed sword. One or two Colchian Soldiers may follow him on if desired, standing as guards to either side of the entrance. ÆETES, still half-drunken and shaky but trying to dominate, faces JASON. MEDEA stands back C., looking moodily at JASON.)*

ÆETES. How dare you bring your ship into our river? *(With a wide, drunken gesture to R. and L.)* But for my holding my hand you'd all have been dead ere this, and your galley splintered and drowned.

JASON. My ship "Argo" has met and passed worse perils than your men-at-arms, King. And my fifty heroes could make sufficient answer to your army. But I come on a matter of greater moment.

ÆETES. Greater than my army? What d'you mean, fellow?

MEDEA *(urgently)*. Father! This is no way to greet an envoy.

ÆETES. Quiet, girl! I'm King of Colchis, remember, and I'll not be bearded by any Greek adventurer. *(To JASON.)* Who are you, and what d'you want?

JASON. I am Jason, rightful King of Iolcus. My uncle has usurped my throne—

ÆETES. Then why aren't you at home, throwing him off it, instead of troubling us?

JASON *(ignoring this)*. To win my kingdom I must fulfil a hard task. That has been decreed by the gods.

ÆETES. Well—well?

JASON. I must take home the Golden Fleece of the sacred ram who carried Phrixus here.

ORCA. I knew it.

MEDEA *(looking at JASON in wonder)*. Take the Golden Fleece?

ÆETES *(laughing)*. Young fool! D'you think the Fleece an apple for your plucking? Oho-ho! It hangs on a tree like any apple—but there is one who guards that tree. *(Significantly.)* Would you like, young stranger, to meet the guardian of the Golden Fleece?

JASON. For that I have come.

ABSYRTUS. Be warned, Jason. Take your ship and your men away from here while there is time. Your kingdom will be of little use to you when you are dead.

ÆETES. Enough, boy! If this princeling is bent upon sacrificing himself to our god who are we to prevent him? Sacrifices like him help to keep the god in a good humour.

ORCA *(going to JASON)*. Prince Jason—there is a vice and a folly in young men to throw themselves into danger. But beware how you go upon this adventure. Do you know what guards the Fleece?



JASON. No.

ORCA. He is a thing of terror. His coils are huge and awful. From the beginning of time he has curled about that tree, and he is so old that the deep crevices of his scales are filled with hideous growths and plants and many smaller serpents—poisonous all. The lower part of him, many-coiled and sluggish, has grown to the tree, but his upper part and head are swift as bolts from Zeus.

JASON (*indifferently*). As to that, serpents have been killed before this.

ORCA. Not such as ours. He is immortal. He never sleeps. He is a god. (*Indicating MEDEA.*) Know that the Princess Medea is his High Priestess.

JASON (*glancing briefly at MEDEA*). If to win the Fleece I must kill him, then I shall kill him.

MEDEA (*coldly*). High words, stranger. Better begone, before you are called to prove your boast.

JASON. I'll to your serpent.

ÆETES. Well, well—he has his own beautiful way of killing. At first, you might think yourself in your lover's arms—but for the smell of him. But afterwards—oh, afterwards—— (*He laughs.*)

JASON. If I kill the serpent I take the Fleece?

ÆETES. Oho! Oh, yes. When you have killed him—— (*He laughs.*)

JASON. You have lost your serpent and your Fleece.

ÆETES. You young fool. Because your gods have tired of their goddesses—small wonder, either!—and bred children on your mortal maidens, you think you all are gods. But mind, if you fail your men return to Greece without you.

JASON. I will tell them this.

ÆETES. Unless, perhaps, we decide to sacrifice them all to the god.

(*He cackles. JASON bows scornfully, turns and strides off L. The Soldiers, if any, follow him. The two WOMEN, curious, follow. PASITHEA and NEPHELE move over to L., looking off after them, stealing off L. a*

*few moments later, after cautious glances to see that MEDEA is not looking.*)

MEDEA (*to ÆETES*). To what things have we come, when the King of Colchis greets men from afar in this fashion? Where are our ancient courtesies?

ÆETES. Courtesies—ha! To thieves? Get within, girl, and shut your mouth before your elders.

MEDEA. They are no thieves. They come openly, with open challenge.

ABSYRTUS. They are Greeks, and their curled arrogance sticks in my teeth. But they are brave enough. Give them hospitality, Father.

ÆETES. Hospitality? To Greeks? Why, the least of them would drink you under the table, boy.

MEDEA. They despise us of the outer world as barbarians all. Show them we are not.

ABSYRTUS. As for you, sister, look well you keep your hate for them. I saw your eyes upon this Jason.

MEDEA (*furiously, moving towards ABSYRTUS*). How dare you!

ABSYRTUS. Nay. Your pardon, sister. (*Catching her hands affectionately.*) I meant only that you are too good for such as these. They sail the seas of the world, and ever take the best—for throwing away.

(*MEDEA shakes him off angrily and turns her back, looking seaward. He looks at her for a moment, hurt, then shrugs and takes ÆETES by the arm.*)

Come, Father. Medea is right. We must entertain these Greeks, however we hate them. We have our pride in Colchis. They'll not return to Greece and tell that we have the habits of savages.

ÆETES. They'll not return at all. Oh, we'll have good sport of them! But I've a mind to entertain that old dog Hercules. I've heard he tells as good a tale as any when he's in wine. We'll give him that will loosen his tongue and fuddle his wits. (*He drinks.*) Come, boy!

(*ÆETES and ABSYRTUS, followed by the SLAVE, go*



*off L. For a moment MEDEA remains quite still. ORCA crouches down stage, watching her. Then ORCA begins to speak quietly, as if speaking to herself.)*

ORCA. I have seen many a perilous adventure  
To dizzy fortune ; many a hand reach out,  
Daring, at valour's tiptoe, stretched beyond man's  
full compass  
To grasp at something man-forbidden. . . . Often  
I have seen man crash headlong from his climbing  
To the deep water of failure.

MEDEA (*not turning*). Will he fail ?

ORCA (*continuing, not answering MEDEA*). From  
gulfs of pain come echoes thinly ; pain  
Of wrecked body and broken mind ;  
The hands gripping hard at emptiness,  
The backbone a taut bow of agony  
And the mouth a thing of horror, back from the teeth  
drawn ;  
Stretched lips opening, curving, a Greek mask  
Some tragic actor wears, o'er-wide a vessel  
For that last soundless shriek, too thin for issue ;  
Thin, yet crashing back, heavy with all the failures  
Of all men's lives, into the hell of the mind,  
A furious, reverberating pain. . . .  
Pain—in that grey and echoing desolation  
Which calls to ultimate loneliness for no joy,  
No hope of aught good more, no hope of loves or  
friends,  
Of man's hand held, or woman's limbs in love,  
But only a passion for the end of all ;  
Of memory, the end of all desire,  
The end of thought and being ;  
That calls for sleep—only for sleep—and silence.  
MEDEA (*who has turned slowly, looking at ORCA*).  
Why do you speak of this ?  
What is your mind, old woman ? You are wise  
Beyond a general wisdom. You have taught me  
Deep secrets more than mortal knowledge—ay,  
And things to shudder at—

ORCA. As the High Priestess  
Of our old god, I taught you. Set apart  
And high, I taught you. As more than womankind  
You have been wise. But now you are woman first,  
And that high part of you, the dedicated,  
Withdrawn and wise ; that better part of you  
Is drowned deep, drowned in the surge of blood  
That calls you woman.

MEDEA. You have grown wild in your words  
As a winter weight of storm.

ORCA. You would forget  
All I have taught you.

MEDEA. Did I ask your lore ?  
Did I go gladly on that path ? I have sickened  
For things unutterable you have taught—

ORCA. You went  
Unwillingly, yet knowing  
Your highest path in my care, only in mine.  
(*Intensely.*) I'd set your steps to the throne of all the  
world.

(*Cackling.*) And you'd throw all away for a man's arms.  
Well, so have other women—

MEDEA (*sharply*). For what man ?  
Who said aught of a man ? Have I ?

ORCA. Ay, whispered  
To your heart.

MEDEA (*horrified*). No.

ORCA. To your heart you have spoken it.  
I can read you, child, or e'er you can read yourself.  
Well, you must have your way—till he has his,  
And then, what better are you than any fool  
Who loves, and breeds, and dies ?

MEDEA (*angrily*). You talk in riddles.

ORCA. Then they are fair t' your reading, for the  
blood

Mounts hot in your cheek's dusk. Now face yourself  
And give yourself plain answer—

MEDEA. To what ?

ORCA. To this :  
This Jason, shall he fail ?



MEDEA. What's that to me ?  
He is a Greek. I hate all Greeks.

ORCA. And hate  
Most willingly breeds love.

MEDEA (*scornfully*). Love !

ORCA. All your vows  
And vigils, dedicated maidenhood,  
Melt like snows in the flame of a pair of lovers  
Kindling each other.

(MEDEA makes an angry gesture. ORCA catches her  
arm, urgently.)

Princess—let him go  
Alone, this Greek, to his fate and failure.

MEDEA. I ?  
What should I have with him ?

ORCA. There is no good  
From him to you. No good, in the end, I know it.  
Let him go alone to the god, and fail—

MEDEA. And fail—  
Why not ? He is proud—

ORCA. Ay, proud. And that same pride  
Is your great doom, and you nurse it. Will you be  
great,

Or never more than woman ? One or other,  
But never both.

MEDEA. I will be lord of myself,  
Woman, and queen, and both. I have that power  
You gave me, you, old woman. Nevermore  
Can you recall that power.

(ORCA cackles. MEDEA continues angrily.)

You talk of things  
I had not even thought—

ORCA. A lie.

MEDEA (*persisting*). I tell you  
I had not thought them. (*Softly*.) Only of the pity  
To give his golden body to such things  
As—must—come—

ORCA (*scornfully*). Ay—and so you pity him ?

From that, to his help ; from that, a step to his arms ;  
From that—such horror teeming out of horror  
As shall bring down your name to the dark, for ever.

MEDEA. Speak plain.

ORCA. I have spoken. Yours the choice.  
You'll make it

No more than once. . . . Remember.

(She goes slowly off R. MEDEA stands quite still,  
struggling with herself.)

MEDEA. Oh, little day of unrepentant light  
Hastening so sharp to the dark. . . . What shall I  
do ?

(What is this Greek to me ?) That ancient woman,  
Sibyl of evil—why has her teaching failed ?  
I have no lore to meet this fate, and horror  
Gapes upon either hand—

(Starting, breaking off, looking L., as JASON enters  
alone.)

Ah !

JASON (*gaily*). Princess Medea !

MEDEA. Where are my brother and the King ?

JASON. Content you.

They drink a cup or two with Hercules  
And my brave Argonauts.

MEDEA. You'd poison them ?

JASON. By Zeus, no ! We are Greeks, and not  
barbarians.

MEDEA (*angrily*). But we are—so you'd say ?

JASON (*easily*). And what of that ?

A Greek knows beauty even in barbarians,  
And you—well, you are beautiful—

MEDEA (*reacting*). Ah—dare you ?

I'm no kept slave or fisher girl—

JASON. Princess,

You are a woman. Any fisher girl  
Is woman, and, so be she looks not ill,  
Must have, as woman, beauty's equal rank.

MEDEA. I'll tell you this, Lord Jason :



There's more to me than beauty, and for all  
Your gross conceit of manhood, you shall know  
I have powers you have not——

JASON (*indifferently*). Ay, to stitch a robe  
Or bear a child. . . . But I must go t' my labours.  
Our "Argo" sails with evening, and the Fleece  
Goes on her——

(*He moves off R., but MEDEA runs at him furiously,  
gripping his arms.*)

MEDEA. Fool and blind! Is there no thing  
Will cool your pride? The task is all above you!  
Did you not see my father mocked—ay, mocked you?  
You'll die of this——

JASON (*shaking her off lightly*). So be. One Greek  
the less  
For you to rail at, then. (*With a shrewd glance.*)  
But I'll not die,  
Only because you hate me——

MEDEA (*looking at him thoughtfully*). Do I hate  
you?  
I do not know. . . . But this I know: 'twere pity  
Foul death should spread his wings for you—for you,  
So young and beautiful. . . . Is there no woman  
Grieves, empty-armed, your absence?

JASON. No.

MEDEA. No mother  
Or wife or lover?

JASON. None.

MEDEA (*sadly*). So you came here to Colchis,  
You and your lovely ship, on a fruitless errand.

JASON (*with sudden pleasure*). My swift-winged  
"Argo"—you have a man's eyes, then,  
To see her beautiful?

MEDEA. Why not a woman's eyes?  
Think you a woman has no vision deeper  
Than robes and ornament, or children's faces?  
You lack a deal of knowledge.

JASON (*more interested in her*). I know this:  
You are not as other women. You are a flame

Might blaze to—great things. (*He takes her hands,  
looking into her eyes, fascinated but awed.*)

You are not as the Greeks.  
You are a stranger woman, of strange customs,  
And, as I hear, terrible.  
Night has beauty and fear—your eyes are night,  
Fathomless, for the drowning of a man  
And all his purpose. I have sailed to Colchis  
On a high quest and a pure. I did not know  
That you and your deep necromancy waited  
To thrust me from my path——

MEDEA (*urgently*). Enough of me!  
Lord Jason—listen! Get your ship about  
In all speed——

JASON. When my task is done.

MEDEA. Your task  
Will not be done. Nor man nor god could do  
What you essay. Get hence—while there is time!  
Jason (*amused*). So you would guard your Fleece?

A pretty guardian—  
But you'll not hinder me.  
MEDEA (*passionately*). Listen, you fool!  
I strive to guard your self——

JASON (*obstinately*). And I have come  
For the Golden Fleece. I'll have no lesser thing.  
I'll have no failure bartered for my life.  
Man strives to gain or die, not to lose hold  
Of high hopes, and, for any ease from peril,  
Earn but regret and loathing of himself  
For what he was, and is, and might have been.

MEDEA (*coldly*). Enough, then! Go t' your  
death. Exchange your hopes  
Of power and joy; of woman's love and children,  
A quiet home, an honoured tomb at the end,  
And a warm corner in man's memory,  
For—what will come to you. Ah, get you gone!  
There will be none to pour your funeral offering  
Of the soft honey and the scented oil,  
Or cut a lock of hair to cheer the stone  
That hides the rags left of your body——



JASON (*raising his right arm*).  
Salute you, lady. So—farewell!

(*He again turns to go off R. MEDEA gazes after him, then, with a gesture of despair, calls him back.*)

MEDEA. No! Stay!  
I'll not have you go—thus. . . . Oh, you foul fates,  
You have made a snare for me, and I am caught  
Between a horror and a horror— (*Holding out her*  
*hands to him.*) Jason!

I'll help you in your task,  
As I alone can help you. . . .  
Oh, brother, father, home, and kingdom—here  
I give you up. And those quick dreams I held  
More close to my breast than ever I'll hold my son,  
I—have forgotten them.

JASON (*indifferently, failing to appreciate her*  
*sacrifice*). You? But you are a woman.  
This is not your task. I shall accomplish it  
Alone. I need no tender-handed woman  
To guide my sword—

MEDEA (*furiously*). You—oh, damned ingrate! You  
Would dare to scorn an offering so large  
As all I have? Oh, I could kill you, Greek,  
And laugh in the killing. I could hate you now—  
I could go mad, and never hellebore  
Should ease such dark as that were. . . . (*Bursting*  
*into tears, throwing her arms about JASON.*)  
Jason, Jason!

I love you. (*Passionately.*) Love you! See, I have  
thrown my self

Into the scales of service, bearing them down  
To your advantage—and my desolation—

(*JASON holds her off, looking into her eyes, awed.*)

JASON. Your eyes are wild. What manner of  
love is this?

You are devouring as the passionate flames  
Ever caressing to kill. . . . I fear you, woman.

MEDEA (*wildly*). There is a fearful knowledge in  
my heart

That storms my eyes—but nothing dread to you.  
(*Humbly, dropping to her knees, clasping his knees.*)  
My arts are yours to serve you. All the world  
Shall earn my hate, but you shall keep my love . . .  
Look in my eyes again.  
See, I have e'en forgotten all my pride . . .  
Jason!

(*JASON, swept by passion, raises her in his arms.*)

JASON. Oh, wild enchantress of the sea,  
I have come far to find you. Now my ship,  
My lovely "Argo," takes a second place. . . .

(*They kiss, then move slowly off towards R. together.*  
*ORCA meets them in the entrance. She is quiet and*  
*cold.*)

ORCA. They say, in olden times, a doom was made  
By the first man who took a woman. . . . Now  
Another doom is made.

MEDEA. What have you seen?

ORCA. The blood of an old god,  
And the blood of a king's son,  
Leading a tale of murder and of woe  
Afar and into a deep of years to go.

(*JASON and MEDEA, awed and silent, go off R. ORCA*  
*stands alone upon the terrace, chanting to herself.*)

The blood of a god and the blood of the son of a king.  
Here is a proud empurpling! . . .

You seekers of royal dye  
On the desolate shores that lie about our lands,  
Now stay your labour and your seeking hands,  
For here is dye more rich than any come from the  
looms of Tyre;  
Blood of the great and the awful, thickened with  
man's high dooms, and heaven's avenging fire.

(*ORCA crouches on the terrace. The FIRST and SECOND*  
*WOMEN enter L. silently, and go to the seat down L.,*



*where they sit together, frightened. ORCA takes no notice of them, muttering to herself.)*

My potion of magic that I gave her—with this will she slay our god to help the stranger. But with what will she help herself? Ah, where is the magic that will help her?

*(The WOMEN watch fearfully. ORCA'S head drops to her breast, and she crouches with her hands spread out and downward before her, looking at the ground. PASITHEA and NEPHELE enter L., laughing. During their following lines they frequently glance off L. and occasionally blow kisses. The WOMEN and ORCA take no notice of them.)*

PASITHEA *(gaily)*. Oh, what a day! Whoever would have thought we should entertain fifty Greeks?

NEPHELE *(laughing)*. If you ask me I think they've been entertaining us.

PASITHEA. Isn't it just our luck, though—month after month with hardly a man worth spending the flick of an eyelid on—

NEPHELE. Much less a kiss—

PASITHEA. Then—a whole shipload at once! *(Casually.)* Too many, of course. *(Leaning against the terrace wall.)* My dear, I'm utterly exhausted.

NEPHELE. I don't wonder—the way you go on.

PASITHEA. Well, the gods be thanked they're not staying the night.

NEPHELE. You don't mean that.

PASITHEA. Don't I? *(Laughing.)* Well, perhaps not. *(Suddenly alarmed.)* I say—I wonder where the Princess is? We shall get into trouble—

NEPHELE. You'll get into trouble more ways than that if you're not careful. But I don't think Princess Medea will have noticed our absence.

PASITHEA. She notices everything.

NEPHELE. Not to-day. I think she's rather taken with the Greek captain.

PASITHEA. No? Really? He'll be the first man she ever looked at, if that's true. *(In mock concern.)*

Oh, dear! I suppose we ought to have stayed to keep her out of mischief.

NEPHELE *(laughing)*. You—to keep anyone out of mischief?

*(They lean against the wall. The FIRST and SECOND WOMEN move down c., as Chorus. During the following, the light gradually dims to suggest the passing of some hours, and sky and sea become rose and indigo. If desired, Soldiers, Argonauts, and more Women may cross, pause and re-cross, miming conversation, laughing, flirting. In this case PASITHEA and NEPHELE flirt with them. ORCA remains quite still, and the others take no notice of the two WOMEN down stage.)*

FIRST WOMAN. Man the glorious,  
Man the great,  
Makes high quest  
And fronts his fate.

SECOND WOMAN. Man the mighty,  
Man the strong,  
Glorifies his  
Deeds in song.

BOTH. But woman, woman  
May not roam.  
She has her life  
Within the home.

FIRST WOMAN. Swelling sail  
And battle-cry  
For man the proud  
And man the high.

SECOND WOMAN. Salt adventure's  
Dazzling gold  
For man the peerless,  
Man the bold.

BOTH. But woman, woman  
Keeps her place,  
Her life to live  
At slower pace  
And kindlier grace.



FIRST WOMAN. For her no brazen clamour of shields, no call to roam,  
Only the small adventures of the market-place and home.

SECOND WOMAN. She knows the peril and pain of love; knows, and is reconciled  
To her particular task, exceeding man's, the bearing of a child.

FIRST WOMAN. She may not take a forward place,  
her voice in council may not raise,  
Yet, if her wisdom lead to right, to man is given all the praise.

SECOND WOMAN. Man for her may take no thought, beyond her lips and limbs for his desire.  
She for him will live and give her all, and ever tend a lovelier fire.

BOTH (*more slowly*). And when his hopes fail, his mouth is ashes, and his life is breaking,  
To her heart is the deeper sorrow and the unrewarded aching.

(*It is now darker, with many shadows, and a beam of poisonous green light from the sea which lights the centre of the terrace. AETES enters drunkenly L., supported by his SLAVE, and reels off R. The others, except ORCA and the two WOMEN, go off slowly to R. and L. PASITHEA and NEPHELE go off R. The two WOMEN move up stage, where they pause for a moment, silhouetted against the light, then go off R. ORCA raises her head. She is now alone.*)

ORCA. The sacred words are slain.  
The dragon's teeth are sown.  
Alas! the useless pain  
Of wasted wisdom thrown  
To a man's arms down.

(ABSURTUS enters L.)

ABSURTUS. I have stayed too long in that boat  
and drunk too much. Where are our soldiers?  
Hell's breath! following our example, I suppose, and

filling their skins with Greek wine. I'll have those same skins flayed off some of them to-morrow. . . .  
(*Looking about him.*) I wonder where the Greek captain has got to? Trying to get the Fleece? (*He laughs.*) Well, he may go on trying, so long as his Greeks have any wine left. (*He looks off R., suddenly.*) Medea—she looks strangely. What ails her?

(*He slips behind a pillar. MEDEA enters R., slowly.*)

MEDEA (*to ORCA*). It is done.

ORCA (*cackling*). Ohe-he! What maid could ever hold from a pretty man?

MEDEA (*furiously*). Damned old hag, stay your tongue! (*Sadly.*) I could not stay to see the end.

ORCA. The end you made. Well, you made your choice. You'll get no good of it. I would I had never seen this day.

ABSURTUS (*emerging*). What is this, Medea?

MEDEA (*turning to him affectionately, but sadly*). Ah, brother, I have— (*Breaking off.*) Well, you shall know—soon. (*Suddenly eager.*) Listen, brother! You always wanted to adventure. Will you sail with me to the end of the seas?

ABSURTUS. Sail with you? What madness is this?

MEDEA (*sadly*). No madness more. Madness is over.

(ORCA cackles.)

Sail in the Greek ship with the heroes—

ABSURTUS. What? And you?

MEDEA. I go with Lord Jason.

ABSURTUS (*aghast*). You?

(*Before he can say anything more PASITHEA, NEPHELE and the two WOMEN rush on R., stopping suddenly in a tense group.*)

PASITHEA. The Greek captain—

NEPHELE. He has killed the serpent-guardian of the Fleece—



PASITHEA. He has taken down the Fleece——

NEPHELE. A woman was with him——

FIRST WOMAN (*wailing*). Our god is dead!

SECOND WOMAN (*wailing*). Weep for the death of a god!

ABSYRTUS. Furies of hell!

MEDEA (*desperately*). Brother—go with me!  
From children we have loved each other—(*shuddering*)  
and I go by terrible ways.

(ABSYRTUS *makes an angry movement*. MEDEA *drops to her knees, gripping his robe.*)

Brother—I love him, but I fear him! You I love  
and do not fear. Go with me—for comfort——

ABSYRTUS (*throwing her violently to the ground*).  
Traitor and whore!

FIRST WOMAN (*looking R.*). The Greek—he is  
coming.

SECOND WOMAN (*looking R.*). Ah! What does he  
bear upon his shoulders? Oh, evil day!

(*The two WOMEN, with PASITHEA and NEPHELE, retreat in a group to L., looking R. JASON enters R. He carries a drawn sword, and over his shoulders is draped the glittering Golden Fleece.*)

JASON (*exalted, to ABSYRTUS*). Well, Barbarian, I  
have your treasure.

ABSYRTUS (*raging and bitter*). Well gained, with  
a woman's robe for your shield, a woman's forbidden  
art to guide your sword.

JASON (*haughtily*). What is this? I need no  
woman's help to my arm.

MEDEA (*reproachfully*). What? Jason!

JASON (*to ABSYRTUS*). I have taken your Fleece,  
and I shall hold it. Will you fight for it?

(ABSYRTUS *puts his hand to his sword, then hesitates, withdrawing his hand.*)

ABSYRTUS. No. I could meet your sword, Greek,  
but not my sister's magic into the bargain. Go, and  
the Furies hound you!

MEDEA. No! We have had enough of curses.

ORCA. You yourself, Princess, will curse the last  
and bring the heaviest doom.

JASON (*gaily, sheathing his sword*). Talk not of  
doom. I sail for Argive shores,  
And nevermore shall "Argo" speed again  
Towards Colchis——

MEDEA (*rising*). Jason—I shall go with you.

JASON (*recoiling from her*). You? I have fear of  
you, Medea——

MEDEA (*starting*). Fear? And after all has passed,  
and what I have done?

JASON. What has been done, my right arm and  
my sword  
Have done——

MEDEA. Ungrateful! Would you deny me, then,  
What I have bought with my soul?

JASON. I say, I fear you,  
Who never yet feared man. There is in your eyes  
What I like not, and so—farewell.

(*He turns his back on her to go off L. ABSYRTUS, furious, snatches out his sword and springs at JASON'S back.*)

ABSYRTUS. Ah, monster!  
Die!

(*But MEDEA, swifter, draws a dagger and springs at ABSYRTUS, striking over his shoulder into his throat. JASON has snatched out his sword and spun round, but only to stare at ABSYRTUS, who is staggering, clutching his throat.*)

Ah-h-h! Medea!

(*He falls. MEDEA watches him in horror, then drops the dagger and falls on her knees beside him. The others, including any Supers who may have entered during the foregoing, are in tense, fearful groups. ORCA is very still.*)

MEDEA (*whispering*). Brother—what drove my arm?



ORCA (*coldly*). The power you conjured.

MEDEA. Little brother—you  
Who shared my childhood's play—

ABSYRTUS (*weakly, smiling at her*). Enough, Medea—  
You are—too rough—for play. . . . Farewell—

(*He dies. MEDEA looks at him in silence, then gently smooths down his eyelids and kisses him.*)

MEDEA. Oh, brother!  
So have I wrought—and what is my reward?

ORCA (*a hand on MEDEA'S shoulder*). Ask yourself  
that when, in a distant land  
And on a distant day, you do a worse thing.

(*MEDEA looks at ORCA, horrified, her hand clawing her mouth.*)

MEDEA (*whispering*). A worse—than this? . . .  
(*She breaks down.*)

Oh, pitiless gods! How am I cast away!  
You who compel our love—and punish it,  
Look upon me, whom you have broken— (*Going  
to JASON with bent head, blind with tears, pleading.*)  
Jason!

At least a word—one small, warm word of thanks,  
A little gleam in the night. . . .  
So much I have done, out of my love for you—

(*JASON remains unresponsive. MEDEA stands, her head bent, her hands idly stroking the Fleece.*)

I killed my brother, only for you—for you.  
You had been dead, else. . . . And I have loved my  
brother

Until I loved you better. . . . Love of you  
Has shut me out from every home in the world  
From every heart in the world, save only yours.  
For love of you

I am a thing abhorred—and in my path  
Lies what more deep cause for abhorring— (*Stif-  
fening, looking up at him with a terrible, desolate  
cry.*) Jason!

JASON (*sadly, not moving*). I came to Colchis on  
a golden errand.

Mine was the dream, and mine the strength to grasp  
And weld it to my will—

MEDEA. But I have helped you!

JASON. I did not ask your help.  
There is no glory in a task fulfilled  
Thus easily. I should have died o' the task  
Ere I took you for help. Oh, woman, woman,  
Why did you come to me with your eyes like wine,  
Your mouth a passion-fruit of rich desires,  
And all your body fettering to the earth  
What I would have reaching the heavens? . . . My  
dream,

My lovely golden dream of high endeavour  
And urgent peril, where is it now? A woman  
Has taken it to her breast and stifled it,  
And all the gold is mud.

MEDEA (*quietly, desolate*). And so for me  
No thanks, but only blame.

ORCA. For woman ever  
More blame than thanks, as it has ever been  
From that long-distant morning of the earth  
When the first woman stole for the first man  
The wisdom of the gods, giving to him  
His lordship of the world, and to herself  
Relentless furies of pursuing shame,  
Travail, and an immutable frustration.

MEDEA (*quietly, drawing away from JASON*). So  
you would leave me here? Well, I can die.  
There is a time when it is good to die,  
And I'm past caring—

JASON (*wearily*). No. You shall come with me,  
Though I fear much for what the end may be.

(*He turns from MEDEA and goes off L. MEDEA hesitates  
for a moment, with a flash of her old pride; then she  
resigns herself, droops her head, and follows him.*  
ORCA moves up to the terrace, looking off to sea. The  
other WOMEN have bowed their heads. Any Men are  
looking off after JASON. After a moment the Men go



*off L., the WOMEN crouching in grief, except ORCA, who stands still, and the FIRST and SECOND WOMEN, who move down stage C., as Chorus. They speak their first verses quietly, with their heads bent, their hands held downward.)*

FIRST WOMAN. There shall be no hand held  
As a friend would hold to thee,  
O child of the night, compelled  
Of the night to be.

SECOND WOMAN. No marriage-torch will flame  
Your love. There shall be no song,  
But only the burning shame  
And the voice of a deep wrong.

FIRST WOMAN (*looking up*).  
Yet, in a woman's fashion,  
My heart would kindlier wait  
For the flood of a wide compassion  
To ease the bonds of hate.

SECOND WOMAN (*looking up*).  
And the breath of a fair to-morrow  
Like a clean blade, to rend  
The clouding mask of sorrow  
From life's face at the end.

*(Then together they raise their arms and throw back their heads, speaking more vigorously. The other WOMEN also raise their heads.)*

BOTH. Sweep, Argo, ship of beauty, eager of prow,  
Swift o'er the high, dark seas and so afar  
Out of our troubled ken,  
And in your lovely course this cheer bestow :  
That every darkness holds an ultimate star  
For the sad sons of men.

SLOW CURTAIN.